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**WW ENGINEERING & SCIENCE**  
**5301 East River Road, Suite 110**  
**Minneapolis, MN 55421**  
**Phone (612) 571-2869**

## **MEMORANDUM**

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**To:** Ted Lietzke  
Site Project Manager for ARCS

**cc:** Jerry Canfield  
Liz Bartz

**From:** Jeff Groen, Project Hydrogeologist

**Date:** September 30, 1993

**Subject:** Wisconsin Steel Works Site  
Site Visit on September 21, 1993  
(Project #04015.23)

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Three staff professionals from WWES (Ted Lietzke, Liz Bartz, and Jeff Groen) visited the Wisconsin Steel Works site (WI Steel) during the morning of September 21, 1993. They were given an escorted 1/2 hour "windshield" tour of the site, which is located approximately seven miles south-southwest of downtown Chicago along the west bank of the Calumet River. A formal presentation of the site was given after the site visit. Also participating in the visit were Ken Tindall and Laura Ripley of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (U.S. EPA), Region 5, as well as representatives of the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ), The U.S. Department of Commerce (DOC), the U.S. Army Corps of Engineering (USACE), and the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency (IEPA). A list of the participants is attached to this memo. The remainder of this memo will be divided into two parts: a description of WI Steel based on the windshield tour and a summary of the subsequent technical and status meeting.

### **WINDSHIELD TOUR OF THE WI STEEL SITE**

An escorted windshield tour of the WI Steel site began shortly after a 9:00 a.m. rendezvous at the front gate (see the attached diagram for reference); Mr. Dick Leonard of the USACE from Buffalo, New York, led the tour. The site is currently divided into six areas, which are located on three separate land parcels: Areas I-IV (approximately 150 acres) include the original steel production, storage, and finishing facilities; Area V (approximately 5 acres) includes the original

administrative building and some parking; and Area VI (approximately 26 acres) which includes a large slag pile and no buildings. Only a few buildings remain of the original facility; most of the original structures have been demolished. The structures observed during the tour included the continuous cast wall in Area I, the No. 6 Merchant Mill, the truck warehouse and the guard shack in Area IV, and the administrative office building in Area V.

Rubble and demolition debris covered most of the site's surface, and robust weeds standing as high as 3-4 feet, were growing between the rubble. Several of the site's 23 monitoring wells were observed during the tour; other RI-related objects or activities included hazard fencing, truss-type roofing above contaminated material (the roofing was painted with graffiti), and Rapid-Response ACM-removal activities related to the No. 6 Merchant Mill. We also observed several concrete pits, approximately 5-feet wide by 15-feet long, which were filled with dark liquid. (Apparently, over 100 pits and foundations exist on the site.)

Based on Mr. Leonard's narrative, the adjacent Calumet River is dredged yearly to a depth of approximately 25 feet. Both the North Slip and the South Slip were apparently also dredged to a depth of approximately 22 feet, but have been largely abandoned in recent years, except for use of the South Slip by the south-adjoining property tenant. The "Old" North Slip, previously existing northeast of the current North Slip, has apparently been partially graded but was not observed during the tour.

East of the WI Steel site and across the river is an operating steel facility (formerly Republic Steel). The area surrounding the site to the northeast, east, and south along the Calumet River is primarily heavy industrial and manufacturing; however, north and west of the site are commercial and low-income residential zones.

Several land parcels have been sold since the EDA's involvement over ten years ago. One such parcel included three mill buildings northwest of Areas I-IV across the railroad tracks. These buildings appeared to be in poor condition, as were the few buildings on-site.

Leonard indicated during the tour that the local stratigraphy included approximately 10 feet of fill, 15 feet of sand (in which the water table exists), and an additional 30 to 50 feet of a dense, low-permeable poorly-sorted clay and gravel known as the Wadsworth Till. Beneath the till at a depth of 50 to 70 feet is bedrock.

As we drove by Area V, we observed that the area was fenced and the area's single building, once used as administrative offices, was boarded-up. Area VI, located on a separate parcel north of the previous areas, included a very large slag (calcium-silicate) pile. A 4-foot berm of slag surrounded the approximately 26-acre area, except for a small access point along 100th Street, bordering Area VI to the north. 100th Street was apparently being re-paved. Residences existed east, north and west of the slag area. The windshield tour was concluded by approximately 10:00 a.m.

### **SUMMARY OF WISTEEL QUARTERLY BRIEFING**

Apparently the quarterly technical and status meetings are normally held in Washington, D.C. However, due to the site tour and the invited presence of the IEPA and the U.S. EPA, the quarterly meeting was held in South Chicago at the South Chicago Savings Bank. The meeting's agenda is included in this memo's attachments.

Sam Nakib, representing Chicago's regional ACE, provided some introductory comments and described the various agency involvements. Michael Oberlitner described the role of the Economic Development Agency (EDA, a branch of the DOC). Mr. Oberlitner has been pursuing site redevelopment and interagency cooperation for over ten years. Initially, his focus was on demolition activities, but contaminant investigation and remediation activities have since become the key issues to site redevelopment.

Lieutenant Colonel Boruch, representing the USACE in Washington, D.C. described the Corp's joint efforts with the DOC. LTC Boruch indicated that the primary project management responsibilities were held by the ACE office in Buffalo, New York, and the Omaha ACE office served as the primary technical resource. LTC Boruch mentioned that their commitment to developing public relations with the local community, and, to that end, he indicated that an 800 number was available near the site's perimeter fences to provide the public with easy-access information. (The phone number, 1-800-833-6390, is indeed functional and I spent over an hour discussing several of the site's technical issues with knowledgeable people at the Buffalo ACE office.)

Dick Leonard, the tour guide and the ACE manager for WI Steel's site assessment and monitoring program from the Buffalo office, presented the technical briefing. Mr. Leonard indicated that a "Rapid Response" program had been successfully implemented during 1991-1992 to address immediate environmental concerns at the site. Some of these rapid response actions included:

fencing around on-site hazards, removal of existing above-ground gas holders, solidification and removal of coal tar material, spraying of some soil sealant to prevent contaminant volatilization, construction of a slag berm to prevent access or dumping near the slag pile, and asbestos abatement in the No. 6 Merchant Mill. Mr. Leonard also indicated that the following activities are being considered for the future: remediation of pits and foundations, removal of 4 existing USTs, installation of slurry walls to prevent contaminated ground water beneath Area II from entering the slips and the Calumet River, additional subsurface investigations, completion of risk assessments, sediment sampling of the slips and the Calumet River, and an investigation of the site's underground tunnels, and ducts, and storm sewer outfalls.

George Brooks, also from the Buffalo ACE office, discussed the site's current schedule and its status with regard to ACE data management, real estate assignments, and its possible NPL ranking. Mr. Brooks stated the Phase II work is scheduled for the spring of 1994, and a response from the IEPA <sup>and U.S. EPA</sup> regarding the recently completed "Site Characterization Interim Report" should be submitted to the USACE during October, 1993. (It is worth noting that Tracey Fitzgerald, IEPA's current project manager for this site, will be replaced by Eric Runkel within approximately two months.)

Ken Tindall, U.S. EPA's District Supervisor, indicated that the U.S. EPA will provide fact sheets and technical support, but their involvement will not expand beyond such technical support until the site is NPL-listed.

Apparently some sort of partnership agreement will be drafted in early October. The EDA is hopeful that the ~~IEPA and the~~ U.S. EPA will sign/execute such an agreement by early December. Another technical and status meeting was suggested for January, 1994. *The location of this meeting has not been selected.* A  
The above technical and status meeting was concluded at approximately 12:00 noon.